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FROM LESSONS IDENTIFIED TO LESSONS LEARNED: AN ANALYTICAL REVIEW OF EU MODEX FIELD EXERCISES

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Abstract

This paper presents a comparative analytical review of EU MODEX FX (European Union Module Field Exercises) conducted under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) across Cycles 6 to 11 (2015-2023). Drawing on internally validated reports, evaluation documents, participant feedback, and field data, the study examines the evolution from lessons identified (LI) to lessons learned (LL), the persistence of systemic gaps, and the emerging potential for integrating environmental sustainability into exercise design. A structured methodological approach combining Grounded Theory (GT), the Context, Input, Process, Product (CIPP) model, the Lesson Learning and Institutional Retention (LLIR) framework, and cross-cycle qualitative analysis enabled a multi-dimensional diagnosis of institutional learning within the UCPM framework. Ten strategic thematic domains were extracted and tracked across six cycles, revealing that 30% of critical lessons achieved full institutional retention, while 20% remained unlearned despite repeated identification, and 50% showed intermediate progress. The findings indicate that several lessons were addressed only temporarily or inconsistently, reflecting persistent institutional gaps in long-term retention. The study proposes strategic recommendations, including the institutionalization of standardized procedures, integration of ecological performance indicators, and reinforcement of pre-exercise synchronization mechanisms. By aligning operational learning with sustainability objectives and standardization of practices, this research supports improved preparedness and institutional learning within the UCPM. The analysis also reflects on Cycle 12 implementation, offering practical insight into improving planning and strengthening systemic resilience in EU Civil Protection operations.

Key words: civil protection, disaster preparedness, EU MODEX field exercises (FX), European Union civil protection mechanism (UCPM), lessons learned (LL)

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